

Financial Aid News

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New Web-based processes reduce paperwork for financial aid payments, Unit Record reporting

With the introduction of two Web-based programs, the Higher Education Coordinating Board has taken another step to reduce paperwork requirements for colleges and universities that administer state aid programs.

Starting this month, institutions will be able to process a number of documents, including requests for financial aid payments and the annual Unit Record Report, in a completely electronic environment.

Payment requests and other documents go "signature-less"

The Board last week introduced a new method for submitting documents electronically on its secure Web site for aid administrators. This new program, called "Signature-less Document Submission," permits aid officers to submit select forms and documents without a physical signature.

This utility replaces the existing "Secure File Upload" for a variety of commonly submitted forms, such as cash requests, disbursement reports, and certification statements.

"The goal of the project was to reduce the number of signatures and physical pieces of paper that people were

submitting," said Pat Castaldo, lead systems analyst at the Board. "We know it isn't perfect, but it is a good step forward in moving a lot of our processes to a fully electronic environment."

Financial aid directors have been given access to a "Secure Form Access Management" screen within the Board's secure Web site for aid administrators. This form allows them to control which employees at their institutions can submit specific forms through the new utility.

Aid administrators can find out more about the signature-free process by logging onto the secure Web site (<https://fortress.wa.gov/hecb/secure>) and clicking on the news item at the top of the page.

Unit Record launches Web-based reporting application.

Colleges and universities will submit their 2002-03 Unit Record Report using a new Web-based reporting application. Unit Record Reports provide information about individual aid recipients for state-level research, analysis, and policy development.

"We developed this new application based on feedback from the schools," said Bruce Parrish, research analyst at the Board. "It is more user-friendly than previous reporting methods. It doesn't require installation on computers because it runs through your Internet browser." The new application includes several reports for administrators to view and edit their data. And, Parrish said, "the finished report is submitted to the Board by a single click of the mouse."

The new Unit Record application is located on the Board's secure Web site for aid administrators (<https://fortress.wa.gov/hecb/secure>). You can find the instruction manual for the application on the Board's public Web site: [Unit Record Application Instruction Manual](#).

Board staff will conduct trainings for the new Web-based application and other subjects relating to the 2002-03 Unit Record Report at two locations over the next couple of weeks. To reserve your space at a training session, or if you need more information about the Unit Record Report or the new application for submitting data, contact Bruce Parrish at brucep@hecb.wa.gov or (360) 753-7853.

Unit Record Report training schedule

Friday, July 18	1 – 4 p.m.	Interface Computer School	Computer Classroom
Tuesday, July 22	1 – 4 p.m.	The Evergreen State College	Banner Classroom, Library Building

HECB finalizes aid program participation agreements for most colleges and universities

Colleges and universities recently submitted agreements to participate in state aid programs for 2003-04. Board staff have now reviewed and approved most of these agreements and their accompanying policies. Institutions should have received letters of approval from the Board last week. With the agreements in place, institutions can begin to draw 2003-04 funds for the programs in which they participate.

Three HECB staff to retire after nearly a century of combined service

Next month, Linda LaMar, Cindy McBeth, and Marc Gaspard will sign out of their computers at the Higher Education Coordinating Board for the last time. The three are retiring from state government with a combined record of more than 90 years in public service.

Linda LaMar

Linda LaMar, senior associate director for education services, joined the agency in 1971 when it was known as the Council on Higher Education. And for all but six of the last 32 years, she has served as one of the key policy analysts in developing and implementing the state's financial aid programs. (Linda served as director of financial aid at Seattle Pacific University from 1985 to 1991.)

"I can't begin to measure the contributions that Linda has made to students and families in this state," said Becki Collins, director of education services at the Board.

"Part of it is the consummate attention to detail she brings to her work and the fact that she has an encyclopedic knowledge of financial aid. But it's also her commitment to the idea that college has to be affordable for all students, regardless of background. That belief has infused her public policy work in financial aid — and our state's low-income students have benefited from it more than they will ever realize."

As much as anything, Becki will miss Linda's sense of humor. "A lot of people don't know it, but Linda has a very wry, disarming wit. It really helps all of us keep things in perspective."

Cindy McBeth

For student employment officers around the state, the name Cindy McBeth is synonymous with the State Work Study (SWS) program. Cindy came to work for the agency when she still in high school in 1973. She joined the SWS program when it was created in 1974 and has been the program manager since 1982.

During Cindy's tenure, the SWS program grew from an annual appropriation of \$500,000 to its current \$17 million. In that time, nearly 170,000 financially needy students have earned more than \$344 million through the program to help them meet the costs of higher education — \$250 million of that in SWS funds appropriated by the Legislature, the rest in employer contributions.

"We'll really miss Cindy," said Betty Gebhardt, associate director for education services. "Her dedication to helping students and assisting institutions and employers has been central to the program's success."

Marc Gaspard

Marc Gaspard, executive director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, is leaving the position he has held since 1995 to join the private sector. Gaspard, who has led the Board longer than anyone in the board's 17-year history, joined the agency following a long career with the state Legislature.

Prior to joining the HECB in December 1995, Gaspard served as Senate Majority Leader.

Gaspard said that one of the most gratifying aspects of working at the HECB has been helping students achieve their educational goals and become fully participating members of society.

"It is difficult to overstate the importance of education in people's lives, and we're reminded of that every day," Gaspard said. "From students who grew up believing they couldn't make it in college, but somehow found the tools and support they needed to realize their dreams, to others who always knew college was in their future, but still needed a little help getting there, it has been an honor to work on behalf of students and their families."

In 1999, Gaspard helped develop and implement the governor's Promise Scholarship program, which helps high-achieving students from low-income families pay for college. Under Gaspard's leadership, the HECB was also responsible for startup and has administered the day-to-day operation of the GET pre-paid tuition program. Since the program began in 1998, more than 36,000 Washington families have opened GET accounts, with a total value of about \$365 million.

In September, Gaspard will become president of the Washington Financial League, a trade association that works with Washington-based savings banks, savings and loan associations, and a few commercial banks.

Linda LaMar's last day is Aug. 15. Cindy McBeth and Marc Gaspard will be leaving Aug. 29.